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ABSTRACT

This document examines the results of a law education workshop designed to change teacher attitudes on various aspects of legal-ethical behavior. One hundred and eight Atlanta elementary and secondary school teachers were pre and postested on nine attitudes. These include attitudes toward (1) teacher conduct in a situation leading to bodily harm of a student, (2) the resultant law suit from the student's injury, (3) legalization of marihuana, (4) corporal punishment, (5) capital punishment, (6) children's work in the home, (7) forced social integration, (8) guarantees given on consumer products, and (9) legal responsibilities of minors in business transactions. Results indicate that the attitude change strategy was not effective in changing workshop participant attitudes. However, there was a marked decrease in the number of "no response" or "not sure" answers indicating a definite trend toward the firming of opinions. Elementary teachers consistently showed more liberal attitudes toward the legal-ethical opinions sampled than did secondary teachers. One inference regarding this finding is that the elementary teacher's attitude is more child centered, i.e., more sympathetic, and therefore less punitive than the secondary teacher's. (DE)

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Test of Applied Concepts of the Law*
--Attitude Section

(1974 Analysis of Data)

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SP 008 043

The following data was collected from 108 teachers enrolled in a 50-hour law education workshop offered from June 14, 1974 to July 3, 1974.

*Summary report prepared for "Attitude Change Toward Legal Concepts" paper presented at the National Council for Social Studies Convention Chicago, College and University Faculty Presentation, Nov. 28, 1974.

ABSTRACT

This paper has two dimensions. The first is a description of the development of an achievement test for elementary and secondary teachers in the area of legal education. The second aspect deals with the results of a law education workshop as it pertains to teacher attitude change in relation to the application of certain laws.

The Test of Applied Concepts of the Law was used to sample teacher attitude changes (pre and post testing) resulting from traditional studies of law. The principal aim of the paper is to point up the differences in attitude changes which occured when planned attitudinal change strategies were employed as against changes occuring without planned attempts at conscious change.

The areas of teacher attitude tested were:

1. Teacher conduct in a situation leading to bodily harm to a student.
2. Attitude of teachers toward a law suit resulting from the above student's injury.
3. Attitude of teachers toward legalization of marijuana.
4. Attitude of teachers toward moderate corporal punishment.
5. Attitude of teachers toward capital punishment.
6. Attitude of teachers toward children's home responsibilities, i.e. work in the home.
7. Attitude of teachers toward combining of school districts by court order, to achieve racial integration.
8. Attitude of teachers toward guarantees given on consumer products.
9. Attitude of teachers toward the legal responsibilities of minors in business transactions.

In results obtained in the collection of attitude data from the workshop, there was one major trend which was discernible -- a marked decrease in the number of "no response" or "not sure" answers, i.e. a definite trend toward the firming of opinions.

Deliberate change strategies employed to modify attitudes of workshop participants, while influencing some direct changes within attitude change sessions, were not significant in affecting attitude changes when pre and post test data were compared.

TEST DEVELOPMENT

In the Spring of 1973 Drs. Crosthwait and Hoffman were retained by the Atlanta Law Education Project to develop an achievement test to be used with participants in the 1973 Summer Law Workshop program.

After discussion with leaders in law education at both the local and national level it was decided that such an achievement test should measure two dimensions of student growth. The primary objective was to measure the understanding of concepts related to the law as applied to situations that people encounter in their daily lives. The second objective was to attempt to assess the attitudes which people hold toward selected aspects of the law.

In order to determine the content of the test many materials designed for legal education were reviewed. It was decided that the items would center around the following list of topics:

1. Criminal law
2. Juvenile law
3. Consumer law
4. Civil rights
5. Narcotic-drug issues
6. Court processes and procedures
7. Family law
8. Employer/employee relations
9. Landlord/tenant relations

Legislative as well as judicial aspects of these topics were included in the test items.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of this study consisted of 108 persons enrolled in an Atlanta, Georgia Public Schools Workshop. The workshop was for school increment credit only and attracted persons from throughout the City of Atlanta. The age and teaching experience level of the population was very diverse and thus is assumed to be a normal population of both elementary and secondary teachers.

The Atlanta City Schools is presently operating under a court order requiring a 60% black - 40% white distribution of the faculty. However, from a random observation of the population of this study it appeared that approximately 80% of the workshop participants were black.

Other factors such as educational level, sex, motivation, etc. are assumed to be random within the before mentioned population.

CURRICULUM

The content for instruction centered around the topics listed in the section of this paper entitled "Test Development."

The teachers were divided into elementary and secondary groups, consisting of approximately 25 persons per group. Local attorneys instructed each group in aspects of the law according to the attorneys expertise.

Reading materials were distributed without cost to the participants and they were encouraged to read as well as discuss with the attorneys.

Presentations were made by classroom teachers inexisting law projects from within the city. These presentations were generally centered on aspects of teaching rather than concepts of law.

Audio and visual presentations were given both in law and/or the teaching of legal concepts.

Each teacher developed a series of lesson outlines for use in their own classroom.

ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDE ITEMS

Eleven attitude items appeared in the Test of Applied Concepts of the Law. A table and graph is provided for each item which separates the responses with regard to individual group classification (elementary, middle school, high school) on both the pre and post assessment instrument. Comparison of the three individual groups (pre-test) will be made as well as comparison with data obtained in the 1973 Law Institute when appropriate.

Item 2 - Item 2 sets up a hypothetical case in which a physical education teacher leaves a class unsupervised while he works on school-related activities. In his absence a boy is hit with a ball which breaks his glasses, and the boy's eye was severely injured. The participants are asked how they regard this teacher's conduct.

TABLE 3

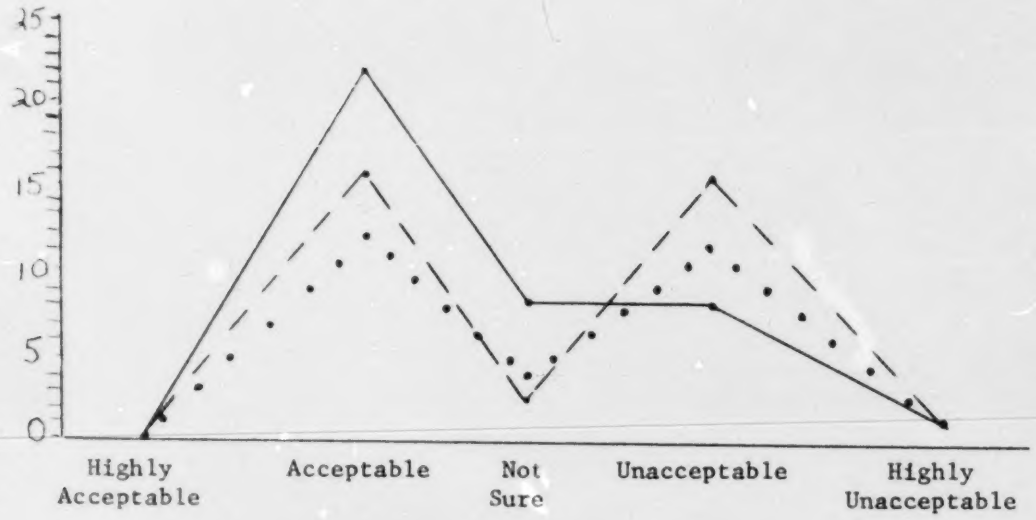
	A	B	C	D	E
Pre Test					
Elementary	0	22	8	8	1
Middle School	0	12	4	12	1
High School	0	16	3	17	1
TOTAL	0	50	15	37	3
Post Test					
Elementary	3	21	7	13	1
Middle School	0	21	2	9	1
High School	0	14	0	7	3
TOTAL	3	56	9	29	5

A = Highly Acceptable, B = Acceptable, C = Not Sure, D = Unacceptable, E = Highly Unacceptable

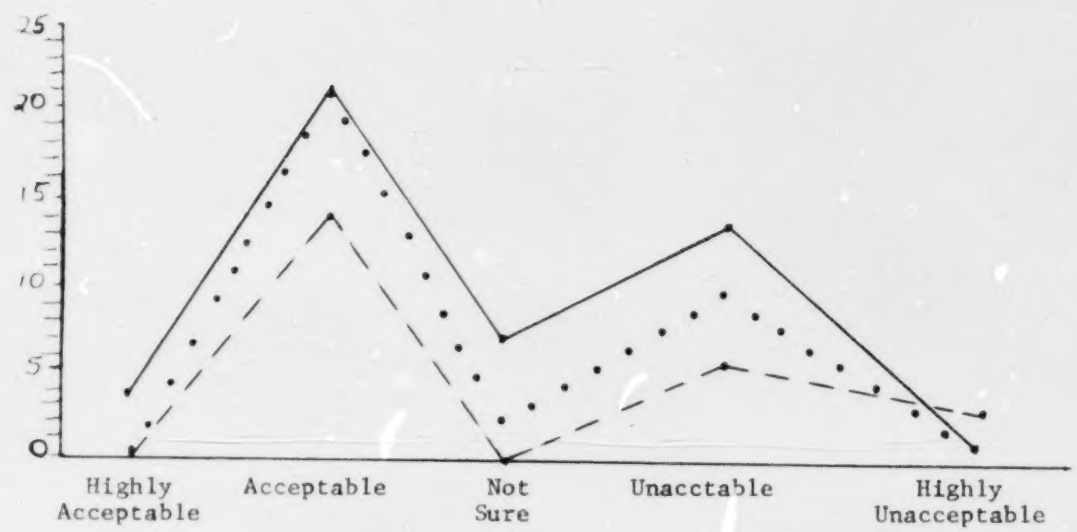
Graph #1

Item 2: How acceptable is a teacher's behavior when he leaves a class without supervision?

Pre test



Post Test



Elementary ——————————

Middle School . . . . . .

High School — — — — — —

There appears to be a slight shift (pre-post) toward finding the teacher's behavior to be acceptable. The results correlate highly with those obtained in 1973, i.e., while there is much division on the acceptability of the physical education teacher's behavior described in Item #2, most (55%-65%) feel he was behaving appropriately.

Item 3 - Item 3 asks how the participants regard the decision of the boy's parents in Item 2 to sue the teacher through the school district.

TABLE 4

	A	B	C	D	E
Pre Test					
Elementary	0	14	11	12	2
Middle School	0	16	2	10	1
High School	0	20	7	9	0
TOTAL	0	50	20	31	3
Post Test					
Elementary	1	20	4	14	4
Middle School	0	10	6	15	0
High School	2	14	3	5	0
TOTAL	3	44	13	34	4

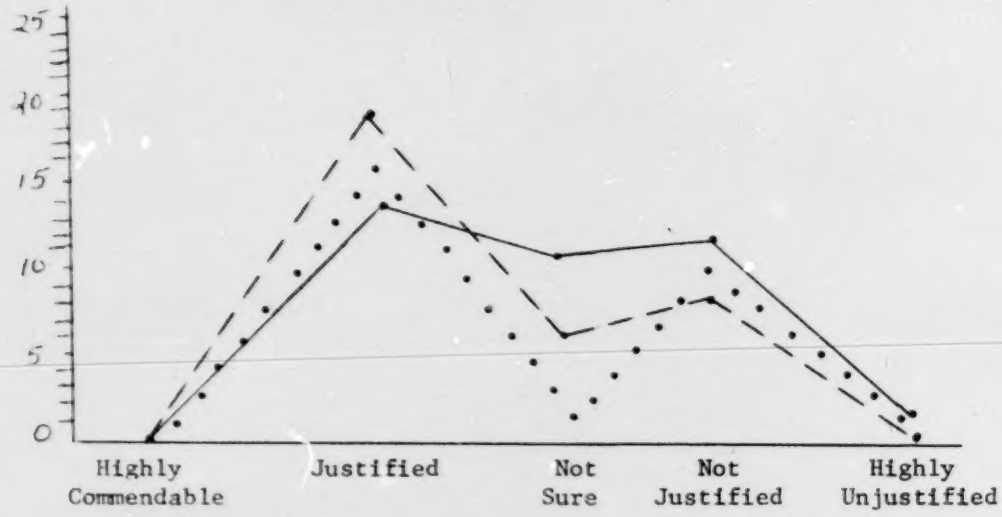
A = Highly Commendable, B = Justifiable, C = Not Sure, D = Not Justifiable, E = Highly Unjustifiable

As in the 1973 Institute, slightly more teachers felt the parents were justified in suing the school district than felt the parents would not be justified. No significant shifts took place (pre-post) during the 1973 or 1974 Institutes.

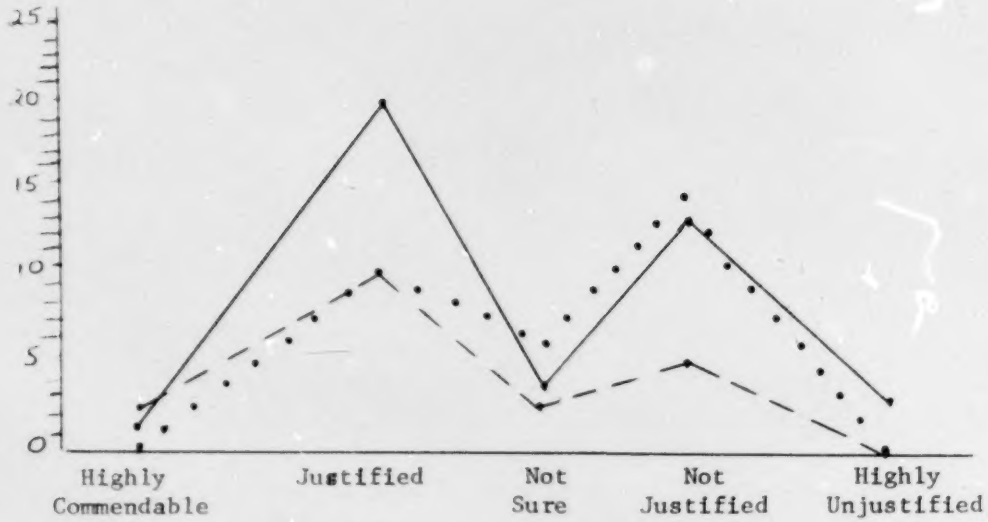
Graph #2

Item 3: How do you regard the decision of the boy's parents in Item 2 to sue the teacher through the school district?

Pre Test



Post Test



Elementary _____

Middle School . . . . . .

High School _ _ _ _ _ _

Item 7 - Item 7 asks if marijuana should be legalized. The results obtained follow:

TABLE 5

	A	B	C	D	E
Pre Test					
Elementary	2	6	10	14	9
Middle School	4	3	16	6	0
High School	3	11	2	9	13
TOTAL	9	20	28	29	22
Post Test					
Elementary	3	13	5	15	10
Middle School	0	3	1	10	11
High School	2	6	0	10	8
TOTAL	5	22	6	35	29

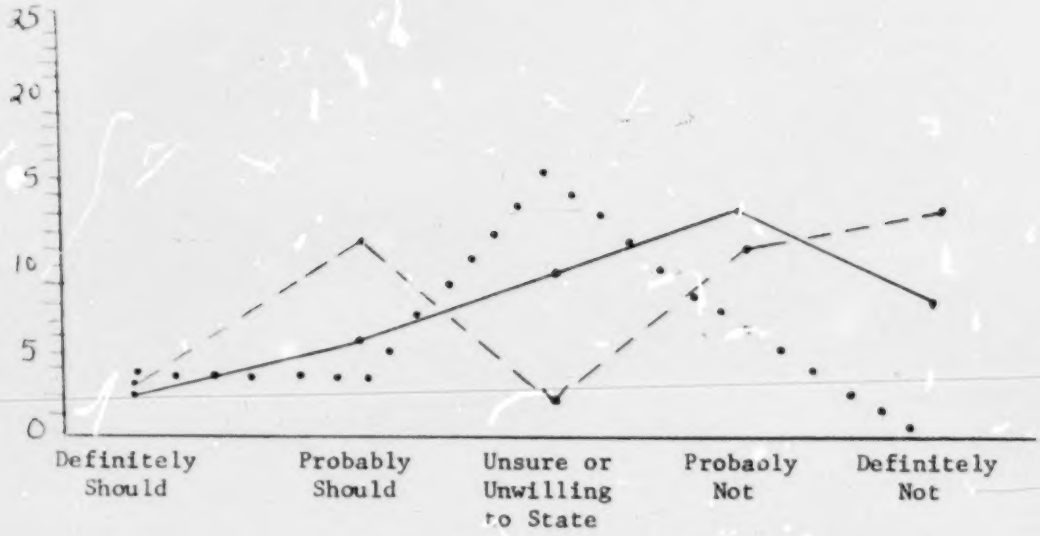
A = Definitely Should, B = Probably Should, C = Unsure or Unwilling to State, D = Probably Not, E = Definitely Not

The results obtained run counter to those found last summer. (Refer to 1973 report) There was a decided shift away from the legalization of marijuana in Summer 1974. One might speculate that information concerning some harmful affects of long-term use of "pot" reported during the time the summer institute was run most likely accounted for this shift.

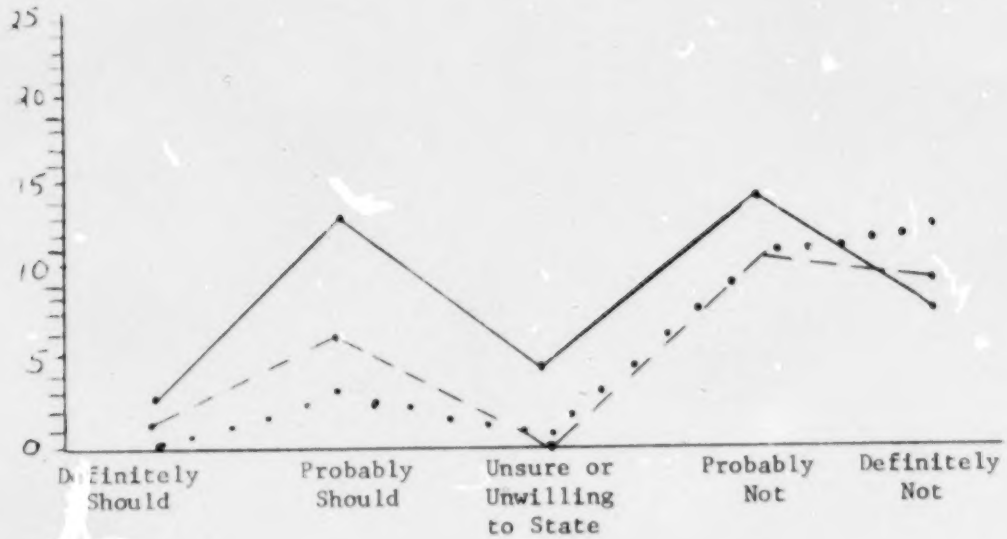
Graph #3

Item 7: Should marijuana be legalized?

Pre Test



Post Test



Elementary _____

Middle School . . . . . .

High School _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Item 11 - Item 11 asks if moderate corporal punishment should be used in the participant's teaching situations. 1974 Summer Institute responses were as follows:

TABLE 6

	A	B	C	D	E
Pre Test					
Elementary	9	13	4	7	3
Middle School	1	16	0	6	6
High School	5	9	1	8	14
TOTAL	15	38	5	21	23
Post Test					
Elementary	12	17	4	9	4
Middle School	3	18	3	5	1
High School	2	11	0	4	9
TOTAL	17	46	7	18	14

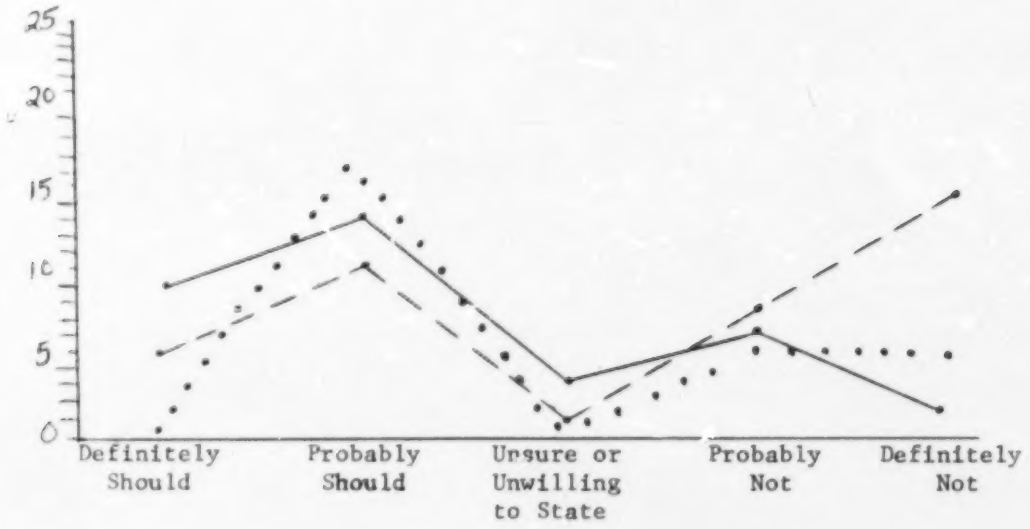
A = Definitely Should, B = Probably Should, C = Unsure or Unwilling to State, D = Probably Not, E = Definitely Not

There is a slight shift toward the acceptable use of corporal punishment (pre vs. post). It is interesting to note that the greatest number favoring the use of corporal punishment were in the elementary group. (For example, 38% of the elementary group seemed somewhat opposed to its use, compared to 50% of the high school group).

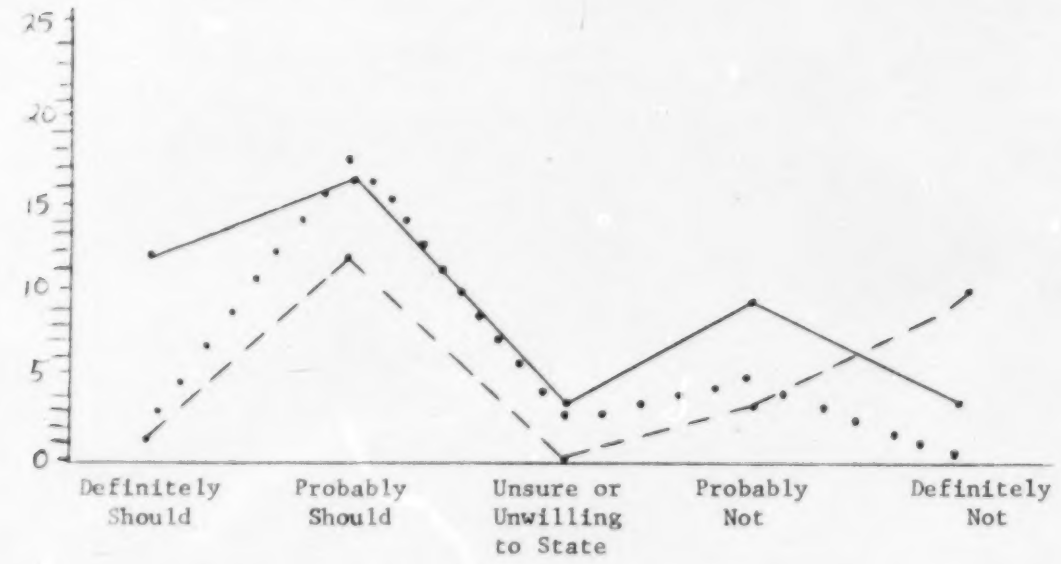
Graph #4

Item 11: Should moderate corporal punishment be used in your teaching situation?

Pre Test



Post Test



Elementary ——————

Middle School . . . . . .

High School — — — — — —

STRATEGY FOR ATTITUDE CHANGE

Three of the eleven attitude items included in the test dealt with assessing attitudes toward capital punishment. The researchers held a separate one and a half-hour session with the elementary and the high school teacher groups.

These sessions utilized a valuing-inquiry process in which the following summarized strategies were employed:

1) A ten-item attitude scale on capital punishment was administered.
2) A brief discussion concerning some conflicting attitudes toward a recent case involving capital punishment in Georgia was discussed.
3) Teachers then read two divergent case studies dealing with capital punishment.
4) Teachers then were encouraged to discuss the case solutions they posed with one other teacher.
5) A ten-item post test was then administered.
6) A discussion was conducted concerning individual and group results.
7) Individuals were encouraged to analyze the process used in the session.

This strategy, then, was the only direct effort made by the researchers to create a situation in which a student would evaluate his attitudes toward a specific area of law related content.

Items 15, 16 and 17 - All three of these items deal with the participants' attitudes toward capital punishment and the instances in which it should be imposed. As a result it is somewhat simpler to deal with these three items together. Item 15 asks if the participant were a juror would he favor imposing the death penalty for murder in the first degree. Item 16 asks the same question in cases involving rape in which the convicted person has a history of felonies. Item 17 deals with the killing of a police officer in the commission of armed robbery in a case in which the convicted person has no history of felonies.

Item #15
TABLE 7

	A	B	C	D	E
Pre Test					
Elementary	3	1	10	16	9
Middle School	3	4	8	9	6
High School	7	12	4	6	9
TOTAL	13	17	22	31	24
Post Test					
Elementary	4	10	7	20	5
Middle School	3	7	6	7	8
High School	6	7	3	8	3
TOTAL	13	24	16	35	16

A = For Nearly Always, B = For More Than Against, C = Not sure or Unwilling to Declare, D = Against More Than For, E = Against Nearly Always

Item #16
Table 8

	A	B	C	D	E
Pre Test					
Elementary	2	6	10	12	10
Middle School	6	6	4	3	5
High School	6	10	3	7	11
TOTAL	14	22	17	22	26
Post Test					
Elementary	2	12	4	20	6
Middle School	7	4	5	8	7
High School	5	7	3	7	4
TOTAL	14	23	12	35	17

A = For Nearly Always, B = For More Than Against, C = Not Sure or Unwilling to Declare, D = Against More Than For, E = Against Nearly Always

Item #17
Table 9

	A	B	C	D	E
Pre Test					
Elementary	3	9	8	12	8
Middle School	3	9	7	8	3
High School	5	16	5	4	8
TOTAL	11	34	20	24	19
Post Test					
Elementary	1	10	10	19	4
Middle School	3	6	4	12	6
High School	6	6	5	6	4
TOTAL	10	22	19	37	14

A = For Nearly Always, B = For More Than Against, C = Not Sure or Unwilling to Declare, C = Against More Than For, E = Against Nearly Always

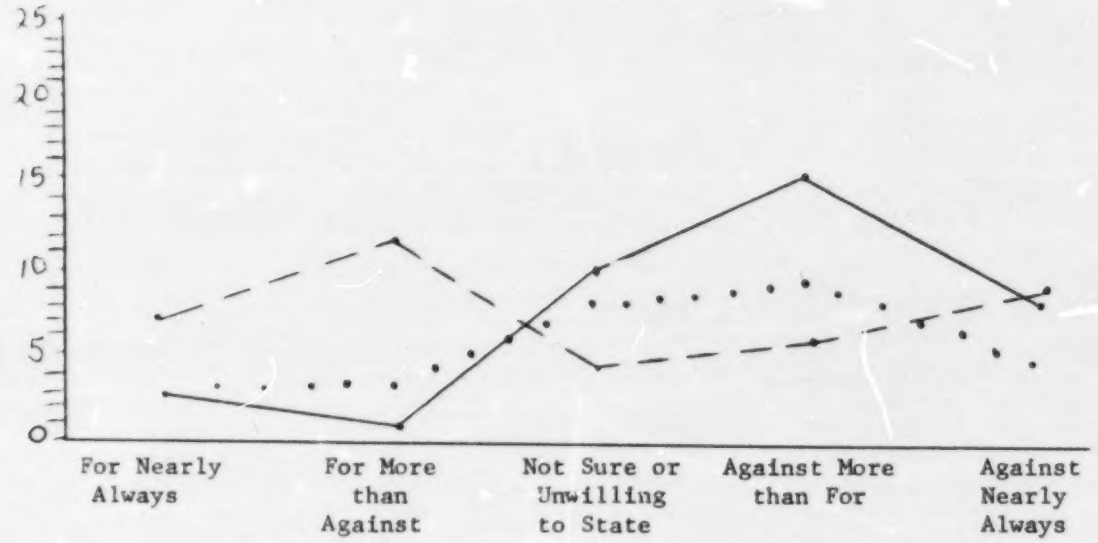
In all three items, the number of "not sure" responses drops.[1]

[1]Throughout the test, number 11 was the only attitude item in which the "not sure" responses increased. As stated in last summer's report "There is a definite trend for the participants to firm opinions... Apparently the workshop serves as a good place for participants to more fully explore their own feelings on these questions on which they have no hard set opinions."

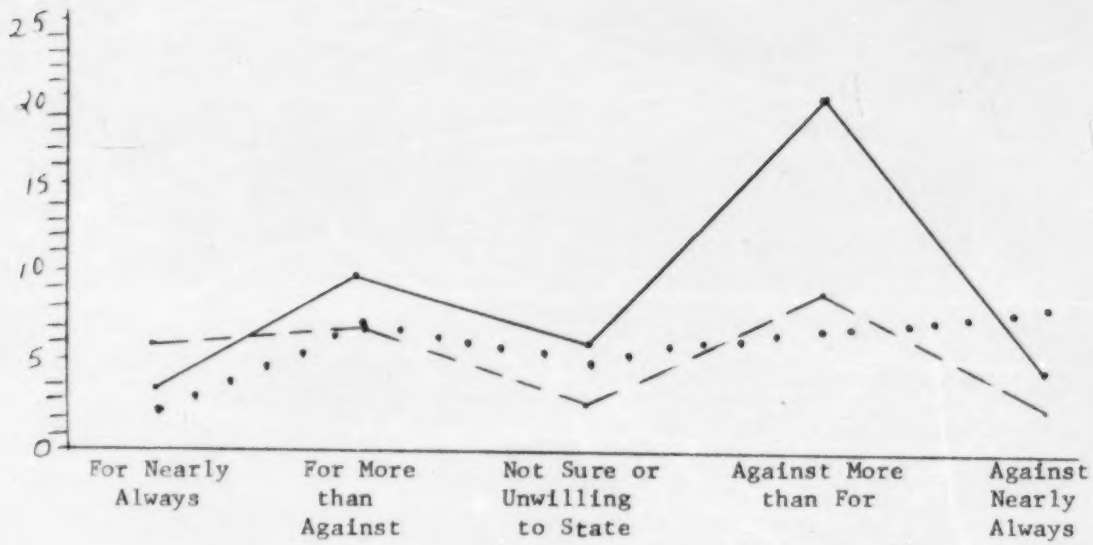
Graph #5

Item 15: If you were a juror, would you favor imposing the death penalty for murder in the first degree?

Pre Test



Post Test



Elementary ————————

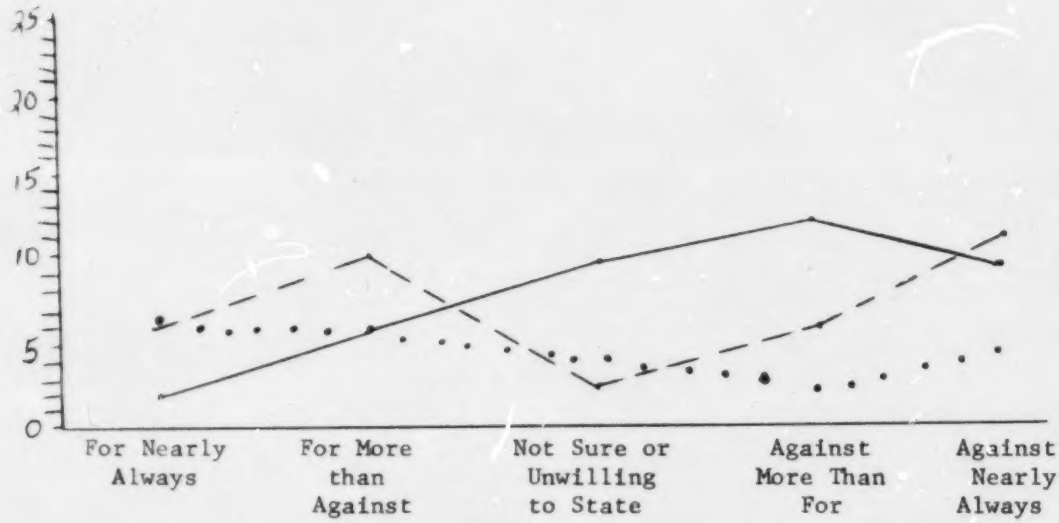
Middle School . . . . . .

High School — — — — —

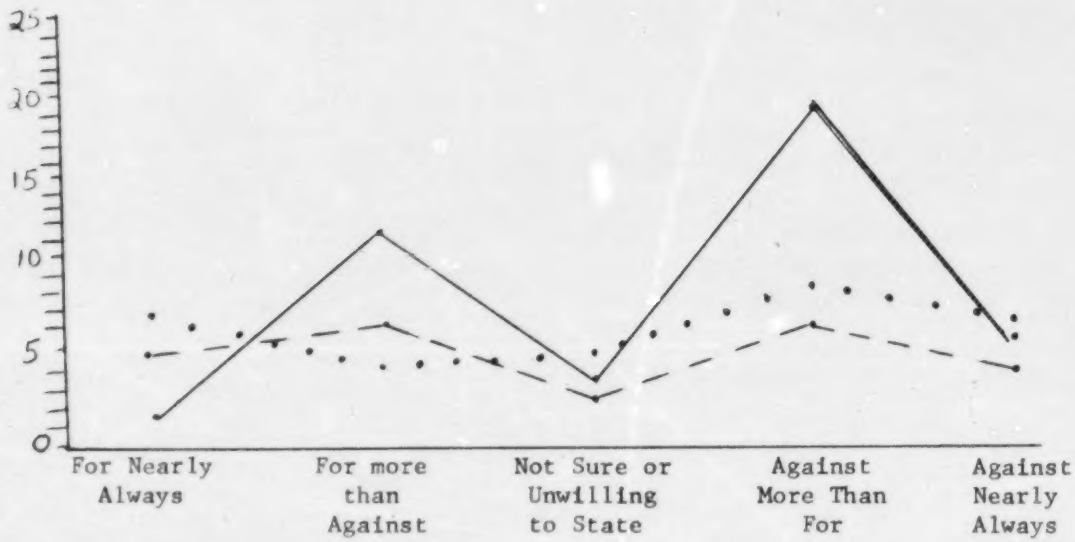
Graph #6

Item 16: If you were a juror, would you favor imposing the death penalty in cases involving rape and in which the convicted person has a history of felonies?

Pre Test



Post Test



Elementary ————————

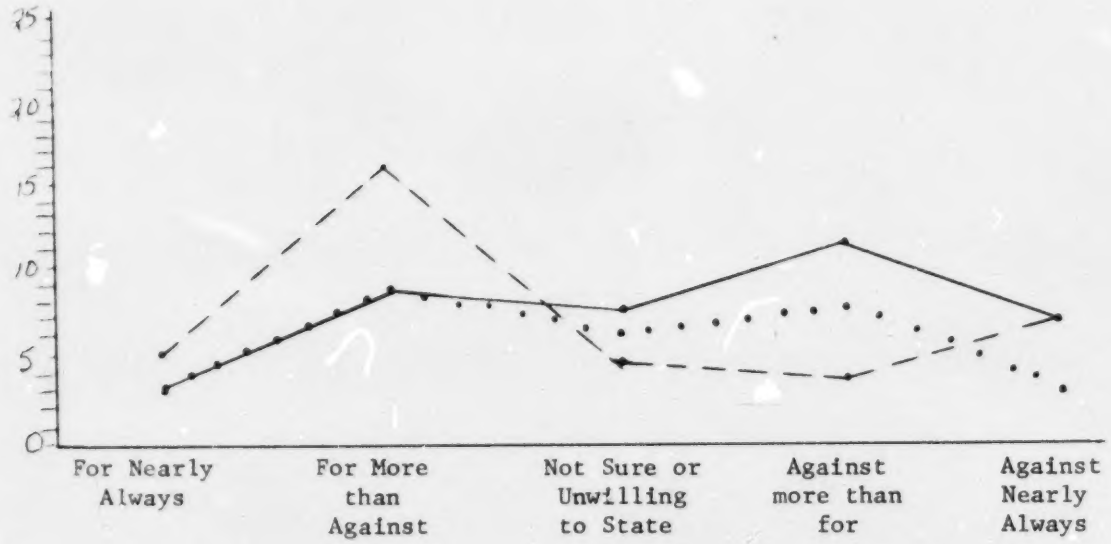
Middle School . . . . . .

High School — — — — —

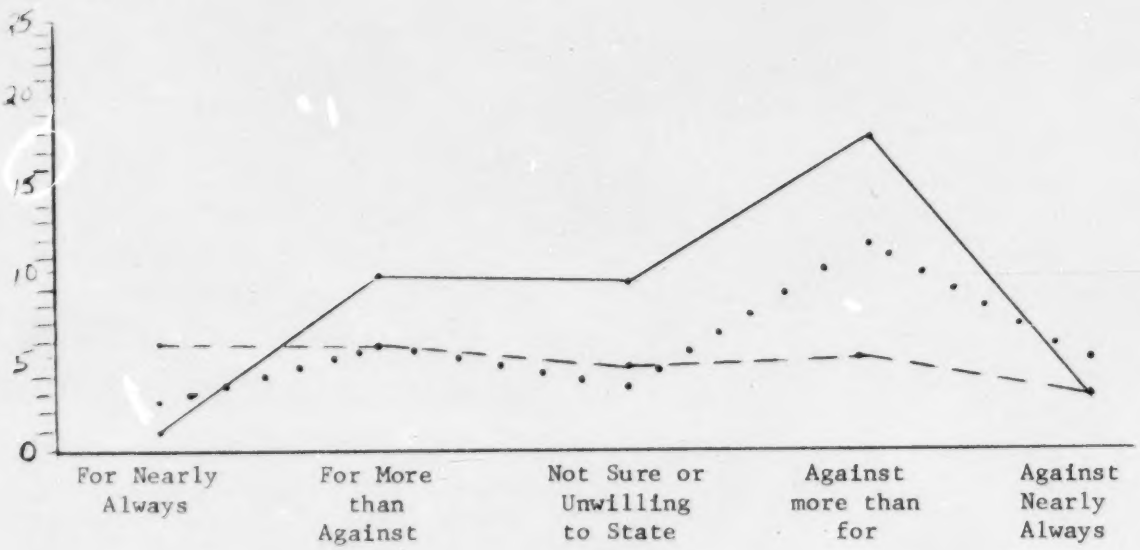
Graph #7

Item 17: If you were a juror, would you favor imposing the death penalty for killing a policeman while committing armed robbery? The convicted person has no history of felonies.

Pre Test



Post Test



Elementary ————————

Middle School . . . . . .

High School — — — — —

Only on Item 17 is there a slight shift away from the use of capital punishment. (45 people were in favor of its use on the pre assessment while only 32 were in favor of its use on the post test assessment.)

As discovered last year, on Items 15 and 16 the number of those opposed to the use of capital punishment outnumber those in favor of its use (about 60/40 ratio). On the pre test for Item 17 which involves the killing of a police officer, the group was divided evenly on whether the death penalty should apply. On the post test, however, the 60/40 ratio against its use was established.

One might speculate that certain problems which occurred during the time of the workshop concerning such matters as leadership within the Atlanta Police Department and criticism of imprudent police behavior by certain Black leaders may have affected the attitudes of nearly all Black population of Atlanta Teachers.

Item 28 - This item deals with the type of work children should do around the home and the circumstances under which they should work. However, there is no significant change from the pre test or the post test.

TABLE 10

	A	B	C	D
Pre Test				
Elementary	38	0	1	0
Middle School	26	0	3	1
High School	32	1	0	2
TOTAL	96	1	4	3
Post Test				
Elementary	47	0	0	0
Middle School	30	0	0	0
High School	26	0	0	1
TOTAL	103	0	0	1

A = Yes, B = No, C = Only Those He Wishes to Do, D = Pay the Child For All Help

Item 30 - Item 30 deals with the combining of school districts in order to promote varied integration. There is no clear cut trend in any direction in the results except for a slight decrease in the number of "not sure" responses.

TABLE 11

	A	B	C	D
Pre Test				
Elementary	5	9	18	5
Middle School	6	9	14	2
High School	9	10	9	7
TOTAL	20	28	41	14
Post Test				
Elementary	7	10	21	5
Middle School	10	4	11	5
High School	10	2	7	8
TOTAL	27	16	38	18

A = Yes, Regardless of how citizens feel, B = Yes, only if citizens want it, C = Unsure or Unwilling to Declare, D = No, Even if citizens want it

Item 33 - Item 33 deals with guarantees on products. Although the hypothetical situation deals with values, it touches upon knowledge of the law.

TABLE 12

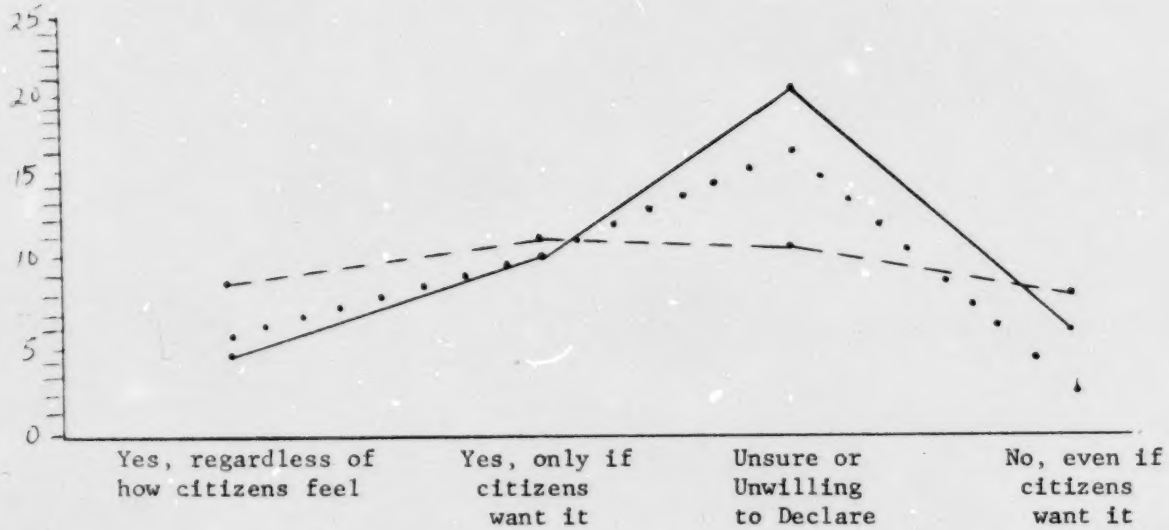
	A	B	C	D
Pre Test				
Elementary	12	9	11	6
Middle School	13	11	4	1
High School	14	4	9	10
TOTAL	39	24	24	17
Post Test				
Elementary	7	10	21	5
Middle School	10	4	11	5
High School	10	2	7	8
TOTAL	24	16	39	18

A = Firm not reliable; should be regulated by law, B = Firm usually reliable; no need for laws in these matters, C = Law already amply protects the consumer, D = "Let the Buyer Beware"

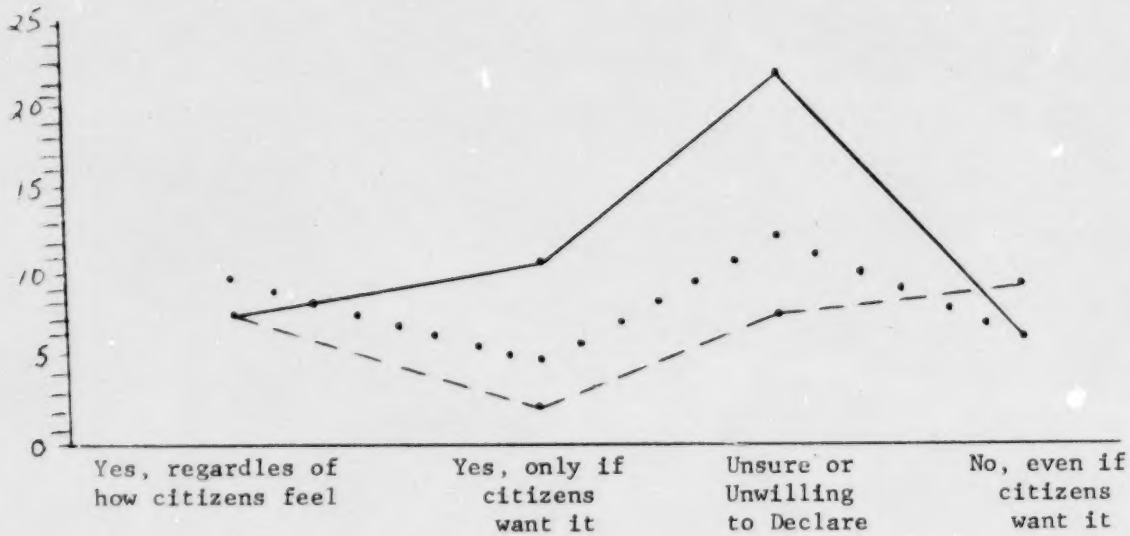
Graph #8

Item 30: Should school districts be combined to promote integration?

Pre Test



Post Test



Elementary _____

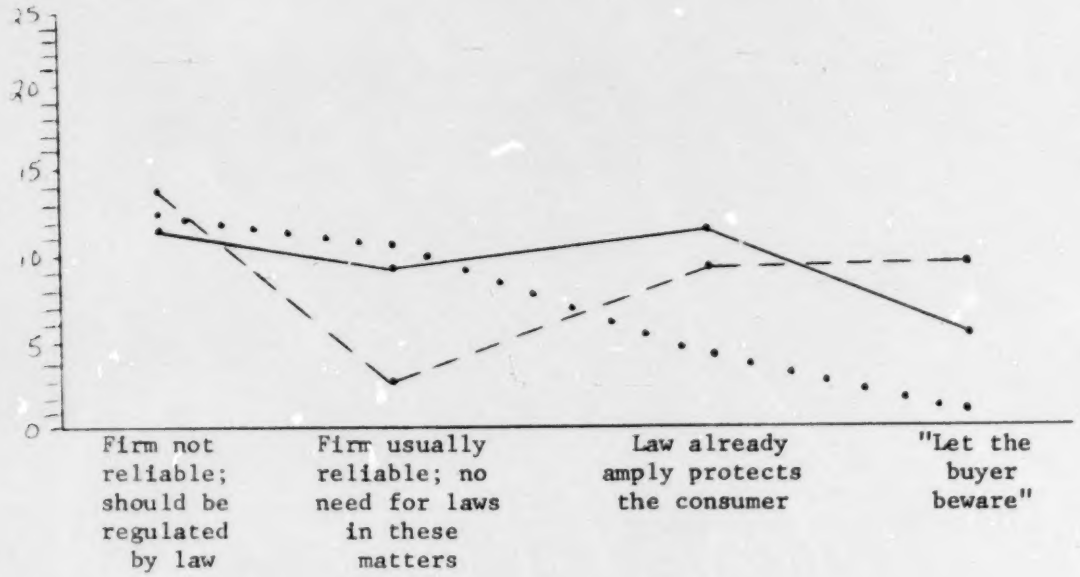
Middle School . . . . . .

High School _ _ _ _ _ _

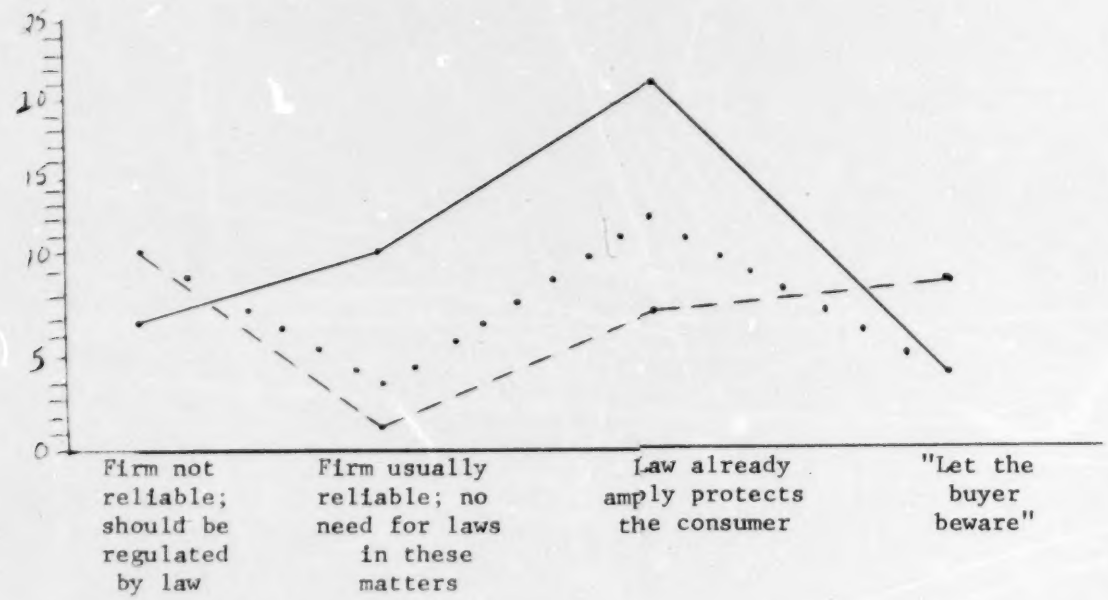
Graph #9

Item 33: A business firm has given a guarantee on a piano. It agrees to repair the piano "only if it is delivered to our factory" and the transportation charges are to be paid by the purchaser. What is your opinion of the firm?

Pre Test



Post Test



Elementary ————————

Middle School . . . . . .

High School _ _ _ _ _ _

There is a strong movement, particularly in the elementary group, toward the position that the law does not need to be strengthened regarding this matter. Perhaps the group developed the attitude during the workshop that consumer education might be more important than stronger consumer "protection." People versed in the law may wish to re-read Item 33 to better determine the validity of the previous statement.

Item 35 - This item is very similar to Item 33 in that it deals with legal values; this case has to do with the legal responsibility of minors.

TABLE 13

	A	B	C	D
Pre Test				
Elementary	6	8	14	12
Middle School	4	8	10	4
High School	7	9	15	5
TOTAL	17	27	39	21
Post Test				
Elementary	6	5	22	11
Middle School	4	10	12	3
High School	2	10	14	2
TOTAL	14	25	48	16

A = Mary, B = Danny, C = The Shop, D = The Bank

All responses have declined, with the exception of the shop. This finding, that this group felt that the shop is most to blame for accepting a check from a minor without making sure there is money in the bank to cover it, is consistent with the results obtained from the 1973 Institute.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

One hundred and eight (108) Atlanta Teachers responded to eleven attitude questions based on various aspects of legal-ethical behavior. Three of the items related directly to a specific legal area in which the investigators directly attempted to employ a valuing strategy to affect the attitude change process. The findings of the study can be summarized thusly:

The attitude change strategy, heretofore described in this paper, was not seen to be effective in changing workshop participant attitudes. (There was, consistent with other attitude items, a firming of opinions, i.e. a decline in the number of "not sure" responses.)

Elementary teachers consistently showed more liberal attitudes toward the legal-ethical opinions sampled. One inference regarding this finding is that the elementary teacher's attitude is more child centered, i.e. she would be more sympathetic and therefore less punitive than the secondary teacher.